Senator Miles Poindexter Began His Insurgent Career Early in Life

Successful Prosecution of a Thieving Banker with a Big "Pull" Resulted in His Election to Congress.

BY JAMES B. MORROW.

WHEN Miles Poindexter, aged twenty-three, six feet in stature, lean as a bone, dark eyed, big jawed and eager, arrived in Walla Walla he had $10, no more and probably a few cents less. He did not know a man or a woman in the place.

In eight months Miles Poindexter was married. In thirteen months he was prosecuting attorney of the county. He was a Democrat in those primitive days of his fast accumulating conquests. Renouncing Bryanism—never accepting it, in fact—he turned Republican. Then he was elected judge of the Superior Court. Two years ago he came to the House of Representatives. Sworn in on March 15, he immediately began discussing the rules. Cannon, he thought, had developed into a tyrant. It was not an original discovery, but it had not been proclaimed overmuch.

On April 1, two weeks in Congress, Miles Poindexter addressed himself to the tariff. He opposed a tax on tea or coffee. A reasonable tax on incomes, however, was defensible from any and all the aspects of justice. The following day, in eulogy of Francis W. Cushman, deceased, the homeliest, the kindliest and the wittiest man in Washington, he said:

"We learned as children, and we believe as men, that there is a great and ever-present God, that He is in this chamber, that He is outside in the glorious brilliancy of this spring day, that he rides upon the storm and exists in the blooming flowers." Thus, by some analogy difficult to follow, "the soul and spirit of Frank Cushman will be with us forever."

Before he had been in the House of Representatives a year, Miles Poindexter became a candidate for United States Senator. Four other men, all of them rich and one of them a millionaire, were also ambitious in the same connection. Miles Poindexter stumped the state on both sides of the Cascade Mountains. The returns, honestly counted and grudgingly announced in some quarters, showed that he had received twenty thousand more votes than all of the other candidates put together.

WILL JOIN INSURGENTS.

This year Miles Poindexter became a Senator in Congress from the State of Washington. He will be forty-three years old next Saturday. Meanwhile, he is still big jawed and lean, also poor and eager. In the Senate he will co-operate and cogitate with Clapp, Cummins, Bristow, Borah and La Follette. Last summer he was one of the first men to visit and commune with Colonel Roosevelt.

Any appraisal of the Senate hereafter must include Miles Poindexter. He is neither a Pericles nor a Daniel Webster so far. But his blood is healthy and vigorous, if not violent, and statesmen, judges and warriors have been his progenitors. Old George Poindexter killed a rich merchant in a duel, prosecuted Aaron Burr for treason and frightened General Jackson into the belief that he was an assassin. George was a United States Senator and the Governor of Mississippi, although the Poindexters, lumping Miles with the rest, were Virginians, living in the valleys among the Blue Ridge Mountains in baronial ease and rude opulence, while Africans sang in their fields and gathered their crops.

And now comes Miles, a refined Poindexter, with unchanged primal elements, applying energy and pertinacity to the problems of life and outstanding in his vindication of what he thinks are the rights and liberties of the common people. Yet he is honest enough to confess that he is no enemy of wealth. Rockefeller, however, who, he avers with mathematical precision, owns property valued at $1,000,000,000, endangers the Republic and should be made innoxious through the instrumentality of the taxing power of the government.

The character of the Senate is changing, it is said. Principles long established are being modified, one is told. Traditions and precedents have ceased to be dominant, so it is stated. Poindexter is described as being a type of the men who are revolutionizing, month by month, by voice alone, the national purposes and processes of legislation. He asserts that money, naturally enough, now rules the country. He would humanize the government. Prospectively, he is of more than common interest and importance. What has he done? And what are his methods? He seems to be a ready, intelligent, tenacious and successful fighter.

Accidentally, almost, he was born in Memphis. His father had fought as an officer in Stuart's cavalry for the Confederacy. Losing his property, he was in Tennessee temporarily. Poindexter's boyhood, however, was spent in Virginia, mostly in the home of his grandfather (a judge), on the banks of the James River. He worked with a party of surveyors and in a governmental fish hatchery after leaving college. Then he took a course in law at Washington and Lee University. John Randolph Tucker was one of his teachers. Tucker had been in Congress, where he was chairman of the Ways and Means Committee for a short period. He was a fine orator and an able lawyer and brought to his students a worldly atmosphere and considerable outside knowledge.

"Having been graduated in June," I said, "you started for Walla Walla in October. What caused you to go there?"

"Literature—advertising literature," Mr. Poindexter answered. "It was alluringly written and strikingly illustrated, and pertained to the city of Seattle. I saw mighty steamships sailing down Puget Sound enveloped in smoke, and could almost feel the throb of the engines. I beheld wide streets alive with the hurry of commerce. So I took a train for Seattle. Reaching Portland, however, I was advised to locate in Walla Walla."

"Had you any means?"

"Oh, yes. My recollection is that I had about $10. I opened a law office at once. The judge of the court made me a referee now and then and occasionally some lawyer would give me a small fee for taking evidence. I was desperately poor, but I broke ground, and in a year and a month was Prosecuting Attorney of Walla Walla County."

"Having been elected as a Democrat," I added.

"Yes; but I left the Democratic party in 1896. Free trade, the free coinage of silver and the socialist planks in Mr. Bryan's platform caused me to vote for William McKinley. I have been a Republican since that time. A year later I moved to Spokane because it was the larger town. I was appointed Assistant Prosecuting Attorney, taking the place that I might have something on which to live while building up a private practice in a strange community. Although I didn't get rich, I bought a comfortable home and did very well for a young man. In a few years I was elected judge of the Superior Court."

"How did you obtain the nomination for Congress in 1908?"

"The Cascade Mountains divide Washington into two great regions. Seattle and Tacoma are west of the mountains; Spokane is east and near the Idaho boundary. I had come into some newspaper prominence throughout Eastern Washington as a prosecuting attorney. J. K. Edmiston had settled in Walla Walla as the agent of several Scotch loan companies. He was a Scotchman himself and at first was poor and meek personally. Becoming prosperous he organized the Walla Walla Savings Bank and was elected president of the company. Afterward he started a bank in Seattle. When the bank at Walla Walla failed it was discovered that Edmiston had used the money of his depositors with which to speculate in land and to help other of his own enterprises. Hundreds of poor people lost all their savings.

"Complaints came to me as Prosecuting Attorney. But Edmiston still retained the countenance and support of important interests. Persons who were unhurt by his failure still regarded him as a man of genius and a public benefactor. One day somebody took a shot at him rather suddenly. After that he rode around under guard in a closed carriage. I had him indicted for embezzlement, and was upbraided for attacking one of the shining lights in the community. He had made it a practice to borrow large sums of money from the Walla Walla Bank and leave his checks in the cash drawer for security. He had no funds on deposit, the bank owed him nothing, and I held that he was a common thief, although I was polite in my language and called him a name that was longer and not so vulgar.

"Feeling was so bitter in the town that Edmiston's lawyers obtained a change of venue, and the trial took place at Pomeroy, in Garfield County. I didn't know the people of that region, and so I hired a local attorney simply to help me select a jury. I wanted farmers, hard-headed men, who were naturally prejudiced against horse thieves and bank looters. I got eleven farmers, but a banker was accepted before I realized the nature of his business. Edmiston had employed three of the best criminal lawyers in Washington. The Superior judge of Walla Walla County came as a witness, but he sat among the counsel for the defendant and assisted them, at least by his presence if not by his suggestions.

BANKER JURYMAN WINS.

"Ladies from Walla Walla walked the streets, calling me an adventurer and a destroyer of character. I was a very young man, you understand, and had no one of prominence to advise me or give me moral support. The first ballot of the jury stood eleven for conviction and one for acquittal. Inside of four hours all of the farmers were talked over by the banker. Edmiston, of course, was declared to be innocent and turned loose.

"But I had other things up my sleeve. I immediately had Edmiston indicted for accepting deposits at a time when, in his own knowledge, the Walla Walla Savings Bank was insolvent. That case was tried at Yakima. Six Scotchmen got on the jury—all of my challenges having been used previously. They stood by Edmiston, thus hanging the jury. On the third trial of the case, also at Yakima, there was a verdict of guilty. Edmiston was sentenced to the penitentiary for two years. While out on bond he fled the country. He has never returned to Washington. I have heard that he is in Egypt.

"The case, fought as it was on both sides, gave me a great deal of publicity and widely extended my acquaintance. Removing to Spokane soon after and becoming Assistant Prosecuting Attorney there, I appeared in court very frequently. The bar was not altogether respectable in those days. It is much better now; indeed, it is as free from reproach as any bar in the country. I told a man the other day that we had no more rascals—some died, some were sent to the penitentiary and some moved to Alaska.

"Soon after taking up my work in Spokane a woman complained to me that W. A. Lewis, a lawyer with a large practice and many influential friends, had collected $1,400 for her and kept it. Another woman, a Swede, came and said that Lewis settled a boarding house partnership for her and refused to give her the proceeds, some $700. I had Lewis indicted for both crimes. He employed the best criminal lawyer in Eastern Washington. I was harshly censured for disgracing a professional brother. Lewis was found guilty and received sentence of seven years in the penitentiary. The law had been vindicated, and I told the court I was willing to drop the case of the Swedish complainant. Lewis and his lawyer hammered the table in angry protest. They wouldn't tolerate such injustice. They thought, you see, that I wasn't sure of my evidence. If cleared at the second trial, Lewis meant to attack his conviction in the other case.

SENDS LEWIS TO PRISON.

"Well, we proceeded to do business. The Swedish woman spoke very bad English; she was toothless besides, and every time she attempted to tell her troubles she began to cry. The noises she made were wholly unintelligible. I got her false teeth, up and down, for both jaws, you understand, and exercised her so that she wouldn't testify and weep simultaneously. The verdict was against Lewis, and the judge gave him eight years. Later, however, the court made the sentences concurrent, and Lewis went to prison for the longer period, instead of fifteen years, or the total of both judgments. His bluffing and table-pounding cost him an additional twelve months in the penitentiary.

"In both the Edmiston case and the Lewis case the public indorsed my activity. A crooked banker and a crooked lawyer had been disposed of effectively. My name, naturally, became familiar all over Eastern Washington. I had been elected to the bench, and after nearly four years' service as a judge there was no impropriety in announcing my candidacy for Congress. Upon resigning the judgeship I made an energetic campaign for nomination against seven other candidates. The district in area covers about two-thirds of Washington, and is larger than Pennsylvania. I travelled in trains, in steamboats and by horse vehicles, opposing Cannonism, so-called, or national legislation by one man from Danville, Ill., in advocating a better control of large corporations.

"The State of Washington has been in the grip of two transportation companies—the Great Northern and the Northern Pacific, both Hill properties. Spokane is four hundred miles east of Seattle and Tacoma. When merchants in Spokane bought goods in New York or Chicago they were charged the full rate to Seattle or Tacoma plus the local rate from Seattle or Tacoma to Spokane.

"In other words, a carload of sugar from Chicago to Spokane would be stopped and unloaded at Spokane, but the merchant buying the sugar would be compelled to pay freightage on the eight hundred miles from Spokane to Seattle or Tacoma and back again, even though the car had never been hauled an inch of the distance. I made such monstrous abuses of power the principal subject of my speaking tour. I was nominated on the issues I chose for argument and was elected by a plurality of 15,000 votes."

"Barely in the House of Representatives," I said, "you served notice that you would be a candidate for the Senate?"

BY CONSTITUENTS' REQUEST.

"As you put it," Mr. Poindexter replied, "I do seem to have been rather precipitate, but I want to say that my correspondence became enormous, with counsel and requests that I enter the contest. Hundreds of our best men told me they were weary of the tyranny and corruption of big business, of railroad government and railroad control of our courts. One of the Supreme Court judges of our state wrote out a decision in an important case and before submitting it to the other judges of the court sent it to St. Paul, the headquarters of the Hill railroads, for revision and suggestion. It was edited and returned. There is no evidence that the other judges knew of the shameful performance, but the decision as changed in St. Paul became the decision of our highest court.

"In modesty I can say that the men who know me believe that I am not afraid of dishonest bankers, dishonest lawyers or extortionate railroad managers. Anyway, and it is more to the case, I stood for the Senate. Geography was against me. My election meant that both Senators would come from the country east of the Cascade Mountains. The former counsel of the Great Northern, the former counsel of the Northern Pacific, a millionaire editor and a gentleman of radical political opinions were my opponents. Large sums of money were spent. I am poor and had to depend on argument by word of mouth. The editor withdrew finally. I polled 20,000 more votes than the other three candidates. My term in the Senate began last March."

"What is an insurgent Republican?" I asked.

"Since November 8 last all original 'standpatters,' I might say, have become insurgents and all insurgents have become 'regulars.' The rebel who succeeds is a citizen in good standing under the new government. At the beginning an insurgent was a Republican who declined to obey the 'machine' or let the 'machine' do his thinking. The 'machine' was everywhere, but its headquarters were at Washington. In the Senate the 'machine' was Nelson W. Aldrich; in the House it was Joseph G. Cannon. If a Republican Senator refused to permit Aldrich to do his thinking and voting he was an insurgent; if a Republican Representative refused to permit Cannon to do his thinking and voting, he also was an insurgent. Aldrich and Cannon, operating together, thought they constituted the Republican party in Congress and the rest of the country.

WON'T AID PRIVATE BUSINESS.

"Defining insurgency more closely, I would say that it condemns the practice and the policy of using any of the functions of government to help men or corporations in their private business. For example, insurgency, as it was once called, would prevent the Sugar Trust from fixing the tariff on its product, and thus taking part, directly or indirectly, in the work of legislation. Its business is to refine sugar. The people have never elected it to either branch of Congress. Nor would insurgency, as I understand it, consent to the writing of any tariff schedule by an interested manufacturer. Schedules so written invariably give the authors excessive profits."

"Will you work with Clapp, Cummins, Bristow, Borah and La Follette in the Senate?"

"That is my intention. I am not a radical, let me say in explanation. Traditionally I am a conservative. My ancestors were Whigs and slave owners. I should like to live in peace and maintain the regular order of society and economics. It is hard work to agitate. One neglects his business and disturbs the harmony of his existence. But if we sit down or stand aside in our love of ease and comfort order will give way to disorder and a change of a radical character will come into our government.

"In the building of our country we have exalted money to the cost of men, and very logically. Anciently in Greece, and nowadays in South America, at all times and everywhere the struggle has been and is between some form of aristocracy and the rest of the people. The aristocracy of force brought in the aristocracy of blood. A king won his crown by the sword and handed it down to his heirs. In this country there is the menace of an aristocracy of business and money. We have been so busy constructing a nation of factories, farms, mines, cities and towns that we have forgotten the spirit which is the life and the inspiration of all people and all governments.

"As a conservative man, I see that headlong materialism, which measures progress entirely by money, must be checked and controlled. An armed enemy camped upon our shores, and I speak advisedly, would be less dangerous to the country than is big business which uses the government as a means to fatten its profits and when even tampers with our courts of justice."

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MILES POINDEXTER.
United States Senator from Washington.
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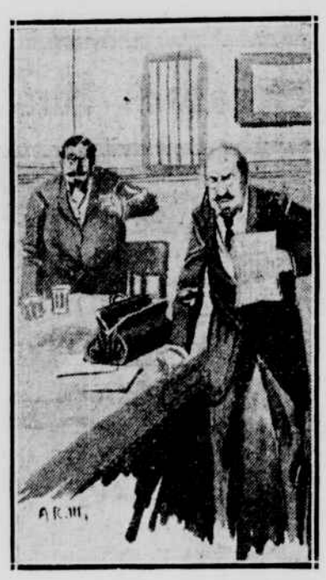
"OLD POINDEXTER KILLED A RICH MERCHANT IN A DUEL."



"LEWIS AND HIS LAWYER HAMMERED THE TABLE IN ANGRY PROTEST."

"LADIES FROM WALLA WALLA WALKED THE STREETS CALLING ME A DESTROYER OF CHARACTER."

Consecration of Cathedral at Hand

Continued from first page.

weight of the proposed tower—75,000 tons—which is to rise above the crossing to a height of 425 feet, it was necessary to do down to firm rock. This required excavating to a depth of seventy-two feet. In 1892 the cornerstone was laid. Ten years later all that showed above the shoulder of the heights was one arch of the crossing and the beginnings of the Belmont Chapel. Then money began to flow in and work went forward more rapidly.

The gifts have been almost innumerable, ranging from $1, or even less, from those who could afford no more, up to more than $650,000 from Mr. and Mrs. Morton. Among them were $500,000 from J. Pierpont Morgan, $100,000 from John and William Astor, $50,000 from D. Willis James, a Presbyterian, who believed that the Episcopal Church was best adapted to preserve a monument to the Apostles' Creed; $100,000, a legacy from Mr. James; $100,000 from Cornelius Vanderbilt at the time of laying the cornerstone, $100,000 from Trinity Church, $40,000 from William C. Schermerhorn, $100,000 from Mrs. F. J. Holland as a memorial to the life and services of her brother, Bishop Brownell; $120,000 from the estate of Charles P. Huntington, $75,000 from George Bowdoin, $50,000 from H. C. Fahnestock, $50,000 from the Cathedral League, in subscriptions of not above $100 each; $350,000 and twelve Barberini tapestries from Elizabeth N. Coles, $116,000 from the estate of Mrs. Mary A. Edson and $175,000 from the estate of Georgia E. Morris.

The giant columns around the choir are memorials to John Devine Jones, Colonel Richard Tylden Auchmuty, Josiah M. Fiske, Bishop Alonzo Potter, of Pennsylvania, a brother of Bishop Horatio Potter; the Rev. Dr. Eugene A. Hoffman, dean of the General Theological Seminary; Harry Manigault Morris and Joseph Lawrence and family. John Jacob Astor gave the funds for the eighth. The windows which are to be placed will be in memory of Gabrielle Ludlow, the Right Rev. John Henry Hobart, John C. Hamilton, Julia Livingston, James Muhlenberg Bailey and in commemoration of St. Monica.

A MISSIONARY TREE.

A missionary, during a Lenten tea, said, pointedly:

"I have established missionary trees all over the country. But perhaps you don't know what a missionary tree is? A missionary tree is one whose profit goes entirely to missions.

"A Roxborough farmer has in his apple orchard a golden pippin tree that helps to support the Chinese missions. A Florida woman has an orange tree that helps to uplift the cannibals of New Guinea. A California nut farmer devotes a walnut tree to the spread of the faith in Zanzibar.

"Missionary trees," the speaker ended, "are very good things, but the principle that underlies them need not be confined to farms and farmers."

In Fame's Spotlight

By Vincent Towne. (Copyright, 1911, the International Syndicate.)

WILLIAM PIERCE FRYE.

Go to bed, children, and hush your cryin',
You've got another Papa on the old Maine line.

THESE WORDS of the immortal Mrs. Casey Jones might have brought some balm to that bereaved family, the Senate of the United States, when, the other week, it sat sniffling over the loss of its long-honored dad. For the Senate, like the Jones family, knows no paternal interregnums. With dear Father it is always a case of "adieu et bon jour," all in one breath—of "the Old Man's dead, long live the Old Man."

"The funeral bak'd meat" doth "furnish forth the marriage tables."

Indeed, not a moment was lost between the doffing of the Senate's paternal mantle by Eugene Hale, of Maine, and its donning by William Pierce Frye, of the same state.

It would be like carrying coals to Newcastle to deliver at the threshold of your memory the fact that the member of longest continuous service in the Senate is always honored by the title of "Father" of that body; so we will hurry on, as space is precious.

Hale enjoyed the hallowed title for years, during all of which time Frye has been only eleven days behind him in the running, as we shall see.

In the French and Indian war a young American colonel was captured, and an Indian was made his jailer. But the spunky colonel promptly killed his red keeper and lived to become one of Washington's major-generals in the Revolution. This intrepid warrior, Joseph Frye, was the great-great-grandsire of the Senate's new dad. As a reward for his services he received a grant of Maine land, over against the New Hampshire border, and here grew up the Fryes, of Fryeburg, which is still on the map.

Our Frye was not a pupil that Teacher could point her finger to as a shining example for the remainder of the class, but he managed to get into Bowdoin and to earn his sheepskin there, at the age of eighteen, despite the fact that his animal spirits often caused his professors some pretty anxious moments.

But the young rascal was now to find a master who would take all of the superfluous mischief out of him. He was apprenticed to William Pitt Fessenden, the great anti-slavery Whig, who saw to it that he kept his nose close to his Blackstone and that he got a good foundation for the practice of law. What was more, Fessenden's fiery eloquence kindled in the stocky youth's heart the first flame of an ambition to enter public life as an orator. And his subsequent years were shaped directly toward that end.

Making good use of the eloquence learned from Fessenden, and being gifted with a fine voice, young Frye began soon to draw crowds to the court house at Lewiston. When he was thirty his neighbors sent him up to the Legislature. That was an even half century ago, the year when the Civil War's first gun sounded in Charleston harbor. And after giving him a second term in the Legislature his townsfolk made him Mayor, then sent him back again to the State House, where Eugene Hale now sat with him—as later he was to be his colleague in the federal Senate for thirty years. But they were not to be long together in the State Legislature, for this same year Frye, when only thirty-six, became the Attorney General of Maine. Three years after this he was elected to Congress.

That was forty years ago last autumn, and he has been a member of Congress ever since.

When Frye first took his seat within the House wing of the National Capitol, his friend Hale was just commencing a second term upon that side of the big dome, and Cullom, of Illinois—now Senator—had just retired after ending three terms there. No member of our present Congress had a seat in either House when Frye thus began his career as a federal legislator. Cannon was not to enter for two years yet. And all of this means that the little giant from Maine is to-day not only the dad of the Senate, but the father of the entire Congress of the United States.

Nor did he fall heir to these greater laurels only the other day when he became the nestor of the upper body. Although Hale for several Congresses past has been able to brag of the longest continuous service in the Senate, he has had to yield to his brother solon from Maine the honor of having the longest unbroken service in Congress as a whole, for there was a break of two years in Hale's Congressional career, and a gap of six in Cullom's.

Even before taking his seat in the House, Frye got busy at the work of helping his friend and neighbor, James G. Blaine, to re-election as Speaker, and after the Plumed Knight had re-won the gavel, Frye became his chief lieutenant on the floor.

Promotion was now rapid for the little Yankee giant. He soon got on the Ways and Means and Judiciary committees, and early in his career became chairman of the Executive Committee. And so he went on making his mark until at the end of a decade his party conceded that he would be Speaker of the next Congress—that to convene in 1881.

But fate has now to serve him the same trick that she has only lately served John Sharp Williams, of Mississippi. This Congress of which Frye hoped to be Speaker came into being on Garfield's inauguration day, March 4, 1881. On the same date Frye's old friend from Maine, Hale, began his first term in the Senate, where Blaine was wearing the other Maine toga. But on that inaugural date Garfield chose Blaine to head his Cabinet.

The Maine Legislature was convened at once and on March 15 Frye was Blaine's successor. Thus did he lose the Speakership and thus did he become Hale's junior in the Senate by eleven days.

Two years after entering the House of our elder statesmen Frye became chairman of the Committee on Rules, and the code which now governs the debates of that body is largely the work of his hands. When the Republicans regained control of the upper house, in the middle of the last Cleveland administration, the little giant was elected president pro tempore of the Senate, the highest office and highest honor which that body can confer—one which Frye has held, now, for sixteen years, a much longer period than it was enjoyed by any of his predecessors. Within which time he has actively presided over the Senate during the six years that the Vice-Presidency was vacant, due to the death of Hobart and to McKinley's assassination when Roosevelt succeeded to the Presidency.

When John Sherman left the Senate to become McKinley's premier, William Pierce Frye had an opportunity to occupy the thus vacated chairmanship of the Appropriations Committee, but because shipping legislation was his hobby, he preferred to retain the chairmanship of the Committee on Commerce, and Hale afterward got the more powerful berth which his Maine colleague had thus laid aside.

Similarly in the Senate reorganization of week before last, that august body's new father might have become chairman of the Committee on Committees, had he desired. But inasmuch as he is preparing to celebrate his eightieth birthday on the 2d of next September, he is not hankering for added responsibilities.

So there you have the Senate's new dad, who might now rise in his chair and grace a speech with this reminiscent prefix:

"Mr. President, as I remarked in Congress forty years ago"——

HE STUMPED THE STATE ON BOTH SIDES OF THE CASCADES.

W. P. FRYE, OF MAINE.
"Father" of the United States Senate.